

From
India

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F. G. Davis

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

Methodist Episcopal Church,

IN

SOUTH INDIA.

PREPARED FOR THE

SOUTH INDIA MISSIONARY CONFERENCE,

HELD AT

Bangalore, June, 1879.

F. G. DAVIS.

BANGALORE:

PRINTED AT THE CAXTON PRESS,
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Methodist Episcopal Church.

It is a pleasure to recognize the courtesy of the committee which named the writer to give a historical sketch of the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church in South India, but while we do so we feel it must be very short. The history of the Methodist Episcopal Church began in Northern India in 1856 but it was not until 1874 that a course of events, which none in her communion had anticipated, led to the organization of this Church in several different centers south of Allahabad. In that year, Rev. William Taylor, then well known in all parts of the world as a successful evangelist, came to India to spend a few months in the Master's work and by a train of Providences not within the scope of this paper, was led, finally, to plant the Methodist Episcopal Church, not only in Bombay and Calcutta but in several parts of South India also.

This paper has only to do with South India and will name only Madras, Bangalore, Secunderabad and Bellary, and we begin at once with Madras.

Mr. Taylor arrived in Madras from Calcutta on the 4th February, 1874 and had been invited there by Dr. E. H. Condon who at once gave him a home and a hearty support in all plans for work, and introduced him "to all the nonconformist ministers of the city, the Missionaries of the Church Mission, and a few of the Establishment, in their own houses."

His work proper, commenced in Madras on February 10th, when by the permission of the committee in charge,

he began a series of services at the Evangelistic Hall. These services were held four nights each week for three weeks and were then transferred to the Memorial Hall, where they continued for four weeks more.

It was about this time, that Mr. Taylor having brought to the notice of a meeting of those who invited him that about three hundred persons had professed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ at the special services which he had been holding, and that about one hundred and sixty of them had expressed an earnest desire to be organized into a Church, that with the concurrence of the meeting a Methodist Episcopal Church was organized; and by July 6th, the number of those who had formally united with the church was 340. At the close of the year the number was 350 and at the close of the year 1878 after deducting deaths and removals the number of members and probationers in Madras and on the Railway line was 362.

also
It was about this time that three steps were taken which, without design perhaps, decided the locations which were to be the principal points of our work in Madras.

These were the renting of the London Mission Chapel in Pursewaukum, the building of a Pandal on the esplanade and the erection of a temporary place of worship at Perambore.

The London Mission Chapel is still used, though often too small for the congregation. The esplanade Pandal was used until May 1878, and then the congregation hired a hall in Broadway where they now worship and the place at Perambore gave way to a comfortable little church in 1877.

This church and lot are owned and paid for, as is a lot at Palaveram, and a site adjoining Doveton College has been purchased for a church to accommodate the congregation at Pursewaukum and Vepery.

In the Pastoral force in Madras there have been few changes. Rev. C. P. Hard, M. A. and Rev. J. E. Robinson were the first to come. Mr. Hard reached Madras December 1874 and at once assumed charge of the work. All of the work started by Mr. Taylor, had at that time been attached to the India Annual Conference in North India and that in the Madras Presidency and Hyderabad was called Madras District, and in addition to his pastoral duties he was made Presiding elder over the district. He held this office until the time of his departure for home in April 1878. In 1876 he was re-appointed preacher in charge, and Rev. F. G. Davis, who had just arrived in India was appointed assistant.

These appointments remained the same for 1877, and Benjamin Peters, who had been employed for more than two years as a Tamil Preacher was admitted into the South India Conference, just organized by Bishop Andrews, and added to the list. In November 1877 three distinct charges were made of the Madras work. Rev. C. P. Hard was appointed to the Vepery circuit and B. Peters for native work. F. G. Davis was appointed to Black Town and Rev. W. F. G. Curties to Perambore and S. W. Railway Line. In April, 1878, Rev. Mr. Hard returned home and Rev. J. Shaw was appointed to succeed him and Mr. Curties was sent to Chadarghat to take Mr. Shaw's place, while Perambore and the Railway Line reverted to the care of Mr. Davis, and the oversight of the District was given to Rev. W. B. Osborn, Presiding Elder of Bombay District. This arrangement still continues.

The appointments for Madras, for 1879 were announced December 11th 1878 and were :—

Vepery, J. Shaw; Black Town, F. G. Davis, and Perambore, A. Gilruth, supply; and, through God's blessing these all remain at their posts to-day.

Two Episcopal visits have been paid our work since the beginning of 1876. The first was paid by Bishop Andrews, who visited every charge in this part of India to the great satisfaction of all. The second was made last December, by Bishop Bowman who presided over the session of the Annual Conference at Madras December 5—11; and every part of the work passed under the most careful inspection each time.

There remains but one more interest in Madras to mention—that of Native work; and in this connection it is natural to mention street preaching first. This was begun by B. Peters, who found pardon in one of Mr. Taylor's services about April 1874. He was helped by a few friends, and soon joined by P. B. Gordon, Esq., who from that day to the present, has spent almost daily, some portion of time in the streets after business hours. The circuit soon began to support Mr. Peters that he might give his whole time to preaching and he gave up his secular business and has remained a constant native worker until the present. He devotes most of the morning to tract distribution and visiting and the latter part of the day to street preaching. His wife also visits some houses regularly and reads the Bible to the women.

The work at Poodoopett was partly native and partly English speaking, but was considered more important for its opportunities for native work than English. A greater part of the time for the last five years, among other work that was done there, were many native children who were regularly taught the scripture. The School is now stopped for want of a building.

“The native work has known the conversion of several and the proclamation of the gospel to thousands.”

In 1874 a man named Pappiah heard the Gospel preached in Poodoopett Pandal, accepted the Saviour and carried the glorious news to his native village, called Truchoor, 65 miles from Madras. A delegate of four men invited us to preach the Gospel. Mr. Peters and Mr. Hard accompanied them, and the result of the preaching was the conversion of 60 souls. A mission was established, but a year afterwards it was handed over to the Church Missionary Society.

There is a Tamil Class now belonging to Madras, part of whom are regular in their attendance and two are in service on the Hills.

From the Tamil Converts in the work in Madras and Truchoor four died in the faith. These were visited regularly by our Native Pastor and he was with three of them at the moment of death. Two of these were from Heathenism and two from Catholicism. Two of them in their sickness gave clear testimony of their trust in Jesus, and one said to her pastor before death "Here he is come. Good by."

There were, by the reports of 1878, 362 Members and Probationers in Madras and on the south Line, 339 S. S. Scholars and Rs 27,018 have been raised by the Madras work for all purposes since it was begun.

The next place of mention which Mr. Taylor visited was Bangalore and he at once arranged for service. Clarendon Hall was placed at his disposal, and preaching was begun, and in less than seven weeks one hundred and forty professed to find forgiveness, of whom about one hundred united to form a Church, and the work was called Bangalore circuit.

The Richmond Town congregation began in Thornlie Bank and worshiped there until the completion of a Chapel on our building site where the Richmond Town M. E. Church now stands.

This place of worship cost about Rs. 2,500 and became the home of the congregation for two and a half happy years. Some repairs were needed however, and after a thorough remodeling at a cost of about Rs. 2,000 it became the nice, tidy Church that now accommodates the congregation.

St. John's Hill had not been so fortunate in a place of worship and in March 1876 it became evident that a better place must be obtained and after earnest efforts another though temporary chapel was built. This occurred in June 1876 and then begun two years and a half of happy religious life both for pastor and people.

God however had better things in store for the little, but brave congregation and about Oct. 1st 1878, "it having been made known to some generous-hearted Christian friends, that it was considered about time to build, they by united effort, secured five plots of ground immediately adjoining the old Chapel premises ; and through the Pastor, made them over as a gift to the Methodist Episcopal Church."

This generous act, with assurances of assistance from other Christian friends, led to the conviction that then was God's time to begin work ; therefore it was decided, "in the fear of the Master immediately to set about the building of new, neat, comfortable and commodious Church for His worship." The work was begun at once and through the special blessing of God there stands, at this writing, ready for dedication in a few days, a beautiful church, worth, with lot Rs, 10,000.

In the pastorate, Bangalore has had fewer changes than Madras. Rev. James Shaw followed Mr. Taylor and remained in charge until November 1877. Rev W. E. Newlon, joined the work in December 1875, and became Pastor of St. John's Hill congregation and remains.

in charge to-day. In November 1877 the circuit was divided into two charges and Rev. J. E. Robinson, the present pastor at Richmond Town was appointed. The present statistics show, for both charges, Members and Probationers 71, Sunday School Scholars 184 and Rs. 22,371 raised for all purposes since the organization of the church. These statistics do not include 1874, and the membership has lost heavily by removals. or 1879

SECUNDERABAD is older than either Madras or Bangalore and was started by a lay-man. He had found pardon in Mr. Taylor's Meetings at Bombay: but being transferred to the Nizam's Dominions soon after, began to work for God both among soldiers and civilians.

In January 1874, Rev. Geo. Bowen from Bombay went to him to help him and a Church was organized during his visit. Shortly after, Rev. J. Shaw became the Pastor and his labors were blessed with special success, and soon had a Church of one hundred members and probationers. This work progressed during the year with "considerable success," and extended to several points near by: and it is a just record to say that much of the success was due to faithful lay-men connected with the Church. A subscription was circulated to raise funds for the erection of a suitable place of worship but their success with money was greater than their success with men. More than two thousand rupees were soon secured but they have not been able to this day to obtain an eligible site within the cantonment.

At Chadarghat the success has been better and a substantial church worth Rs. 12,100 accommodates the congregation. This circuit was also made to include Trimulgherry and Bolarum and at the first place there has been a weekly meeting kept up for the soldiers. At Bolarum "a house was rented and all branches of religious work main-

tained." The adjacent stations on the Railway were also cared for.

The first regular Pastor of this circuit was Rev. J. E. Robinson, who came from America in 1874. His first year was spent here alone but in early part of 1876 he was joined by Rev. W. F. G. Curties. In Nov. 1877 Mr. Robinson closed his pastorate here, he having been appointed to Richmond Town, Bangalore. The circuit was divided this year, and Mr. Shaw appointed Pastor at Chadarghat. He was sent in May to fill the place left vacant by Mr. Hard and Mr. Curties again became the Pastor. The present Pastor is Rev. C. W. Christian. He was appointed Dec. 1878 by Bishop Bowman. Rev. W. J. Gladwin became Pastor at Secunderabad on the division of the circuit and still remains the Pastor. These charges report at present a united membership of 77 Members and Probationers, 199 S. S. Scholars and Rs. 22,550 for all purposes, not including receipts of 1874.

BELLARY was first occupied by *Methodist* services in November 1875. The first visit was made by Rev. C. P. Hard, Rev. J. E. Robinson and Mr. C. R. Jeffries, and they went at the invitation of some of the residents there.

Their services continued at that time for about three weeks, and when Mr. Hard and Mr. Robinson were obliged to leave they were asked to form a Church which they did, leaving Mr. Jeffries there as Pastor. Those who wished to become members of the church, numbered we are told, about forty, and there were organized into a S. School forty-two children. The services at this time and until April 1877, were, by permission, held in the Government school room at the Fort.

In 1876, Philip Phillips the Singing Pilgrim of America visited Bellary on the night of February 3rd, by the efforts

of Mr. Phillips Rs. 2,600, were subscribed toward a "building fund." This eventually netted Rs. 1,700. The Adjutant and Quarter-master with a number of non-commissioned officers and men of H. M. 43rd Regt. giving nearly one-fourth of the Rs. 1,700.

Mr. Jefferies remained with the Society up to January 2nd, 1877 at which time Rev. C. B. Ward just arrived from America became Pastor. At this date there were 36 full Members and 3 Probationers on the church Records. During this year a good work was done among soldiers resulting in the conversion of about 16, and in August in answer to prayer, we obtained the finest site for a church, in Bellary Fort. September 25th 1877, the first ground was broken for the foundation of a church. It is stone 25x50 ft., iron roof, costing less than Rs. 4,000, and seats 150 persons.

Leaving the Government School April 15th they worshiped in a plain pandal till November, then in a private house till Feb. 4. 1878 when the new church was opened, Rev. E. Lewis of the London Mission preaching the first sermon and Rev. C. P. Hard presiding Elder preaching in the evening. A number of Railway stations being included in the Bellary work, on the 17th of February 1878 Mr. Pincott, a local preacher, having resigned his appointment in the G. I. P. Railway, became assistant preacher of Bellary circuit. In March, a new Regt. H. M's. 2-13 arrived from England and for four months a good work was carried on the line, and in Bellary. Following June 28, 1878, Mr. Pincott was removed to Madras, and there he ended his labors. He died September 14, 1878, of fever, a man much blessed of God and dearly loved of all who knew him.

A month later Mr. A. Moore took his place on Bellary circuit. In December 1878, the whole of the Railway work was joined to Bellary circuit, and Mr. T. E. Morton became

assistant pastor and now spends most of his time along the line. At the close of 1878, this circuit had 28 probationers, 39 full members, 4 local preachers, and reported for all purposes since beginning Rs. 10,000. Sunday schools 2, officers and teachers 8, and scholars 73. All is working well at this post and a day school lately started by the pastor's wife, and an orphanage began in March last, indicate more work and more faith.

F. G. DAVIS.

June 1879.



